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Southern Gardens

"Why, they look as fresh as gardens!"
—Lysistrata

Welcome to beautiful, historic . . .

*Polished pebbles
crunch underfoot like
tiny bells jingling of holidays, enticing
you along the close path that
curls whimsically down to*

*a carefully cultivated lawn,
glistening with dew like
youth on its implacable face, unveiled as
the morning mist melts under
the burning gaze of the sun.*

*Shameless, it
stretches, languidly flexing
well-manicured fingertips beckoning you on to*

*the pretty confusion of the azaleas.
Their lustful pink and coral
blossoms gossip like
girls at a dance, tittering as
the gust ruffles their barren petals.
Odorlessly they excite
the breeze and it stirs
the boughs, but it cannot tease*

*the stately cypress,
towering darkly beyond like
a native queen shrouded in
a gray lace mantilla, mired in
still waters that breed alligators.*

. . . at your own risk.
—Leslie Brooks

The People's Sea

The tempestuous search persists.

The surging thundering force

Still races toward the rocky barrier

And finds nothing.

It heaves and spills into bubbling foam

That laughs at the expectant billows

Driving Forward.

Their laughter is a warning that

The thunder extinguishes.

Eternal is the course of the sea.

—Eileen Vickery

See Throughs

One by one the crowd gathers,

Conversation and party noises.

Vociferation.

Games and dancing,

Laughter and drunkenness,

Superficial delights.

My loneliness observes the tumult with mixed emotions.

Sincerity mourns.

—Claire Crouch

From My Undergraduate Years

(Corn once composed by a faculty member too cowardly to admit authorship)

<i>Patterns on the Sand</i>	<i>To streak a slash of lightening,</i>
<i>Night and the ocean</i>	<i>White against the black;</i>
<i>And nothing beyond save</i>	<i>To rend an envious path</i>
<i>One</i>	<i>Against receding strength;</i>
<i>The Great wave beating out</i>	<i>Dashed hard upon the sand,</i>
<i>Its life upon the earth.</i>	<i>Then seeking, clawing for a hold,</i>
<i>We are like that—</i>	<i>Trying to prolong the life that</i>
<i>Emanating from the depths,</i>	<i>Ebbs,</i>
<i>The great vacuum, inky</i>	<i>Inevitably returning,</i>
<i>Void,</i>	<i>Dragged back into the void.</i>
<i>To rise, caught up</i>	<i>It ends its life but not in vain,</i>
<i>In the tumultuous roar of</i>	<i>Dying to live in patterns upon the</i>
<i>Being</i>	<i>Sand.</i>

*Jeaned jesters,
Pierced prophets,
Standing on their green-grass podium.
Wildly waving
Flags of freedom,
Frenzied frolic
Soon disrupted.
Shotgun shootings
Friends now falling,
All got up except the four—
Murdered martyrs
Symbolic symbols
of freedom failing
of freedom felled.*

— Cam Deham

*You speak
and tell me
“Come along.”
You let me follow like
a sad-eyed pup
without a home.
I follow closely
for I fear being
left behind.*

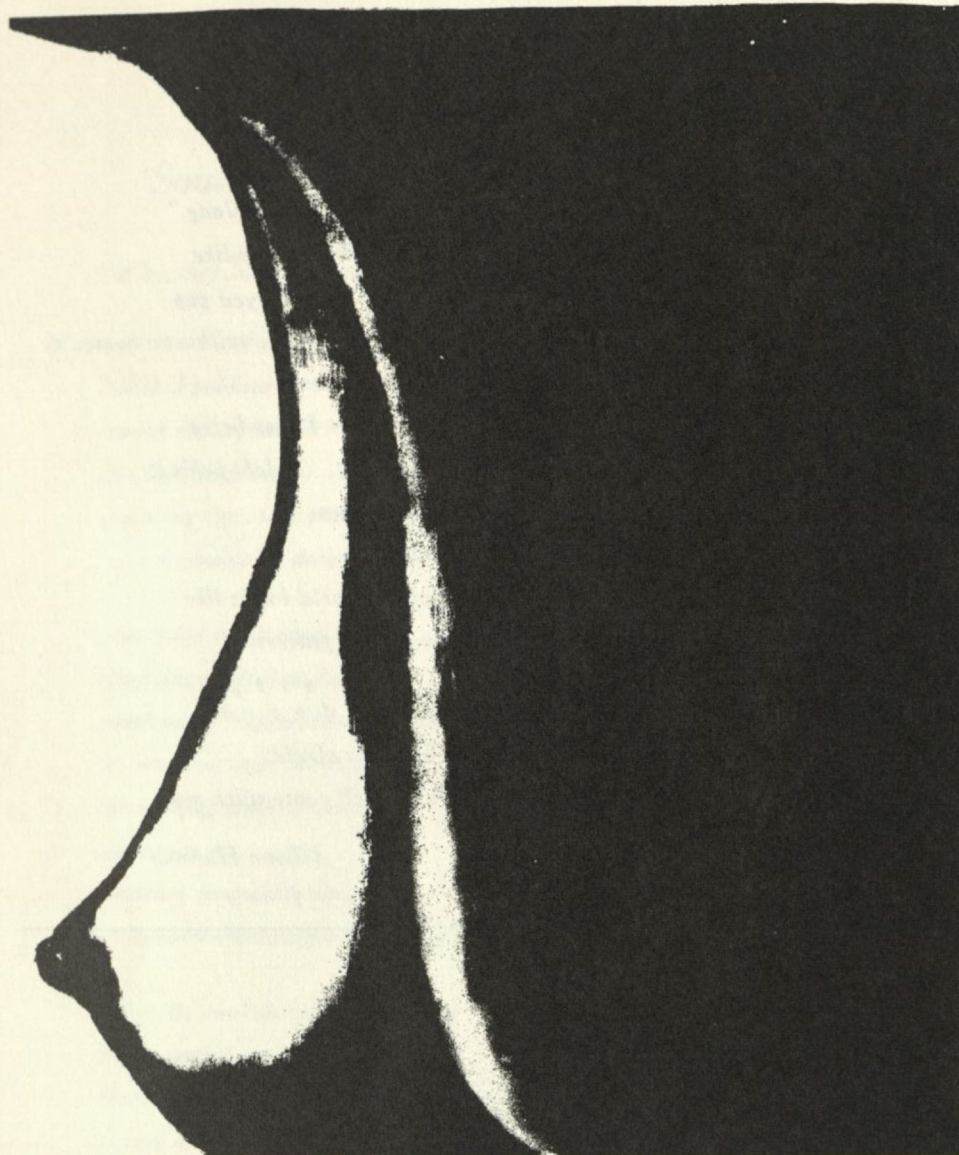
*I want to run
ahead and see
what the world looks like
without the patterned
o t t p
f o s e s
but I am afraid.
No one will come with me.*

Allison Harmon

Louisa

*Through the night the notes
she played
gave beauty to the lights
that made
a shadow soft upon her chin
to frame the glow that shone within
her tender eyes.
Then, quietly, a song she sang
more softly than
the silken rain.
Her voice was gentle,
like the night,
and warmer than the candlelight
that bathed her hands.
She sighed her wise
contented smile
and I remained unmoving
while
a velvet mist enclosed her there
to blend into the sweet night air
and fade away.*

G. Meredythe Vallee



Bosom, Natalie Ryan

Credo

*It is not given man to lie in peace
While battles rage,
Nor should we long remain
Where life is calm.
Glory may be found upon the mountain,
But in the valley
There are people;
Do not be afraid of causes—
Greatness of itself is not worthwhile:
Struggle is.*

—Virginia Slack

Bust

*The dome of whirling light atop the patrol car
swept the early morning blackness with its blue rays—
as a cowboy on the range
lashes the dusty air with his lariat—
whipping wider and wider above his head
with brisk, muscular strokes,
straining
to lasso a furious stallion—
bucking for his life,
to jerk the choking knot around his neck
and haul him in—
strangling—
for branding.*

— *Leslie Brooks*

Living in Relief

*Moving inside me the memory of childhood—
across a green field running
and watching run
I am
at the same instant
runner and watcher
Giving birth
to see myself born—
Becoming—
after so long waiting—
mother and child.
And there is nothing around us but everything
so that you must smile
and I sigh in relief
And in relief Be.*

— *Maude Laslie*

Instant Monday

gray day

grade-A

monday

drizzle drizzle

d

r

i

p

! grind

falling far behind

standards for a freshperked

pot of ...

blah

have a cup! of

drizzle-dripped, grade-A, gray day:

instant monday

— Lisa McKinney

Faces in a Magazine

Faces in a magazine—

*Children with dirty noses pressed against wire fences,
the metal rungs clasped by small inquisitive hands'*

mangled from a misplaced bomb

Yellow cheeks kissed by tears and blood

Tiny pink lips knowing only garbage scraps and

Yankee cigarettes

Protruding ears that hear the zang of bullets in place

of childish ditties

Large brown eyes, no longer innocent

Miniature men, realizing five is too old, and six a

lifetime

Flip the page—

Try to forget—

After all, they are only faces in a magazine.

—Jill Gerber



"We've all gone to Look for America"

Plains

lumbering big in crazy Kathryn

one hip high walking hard

here comes crazy Kathryn

"have some cake Kathryn

would you like a coke?"

(hear the snicker here)

nurse coming in fast

wearing limp

used to be fresh white

"alright Kathryn let's go"

(authority's ignorant voice

gone cold)

"I didn't ask for it tell her I didn't ask

you for no cake."

(whisper desperate me inside this head)

"let's go Kathryn

she's insane

you know."

lumbering big out crazy Kathryn

one hip high walking hard

there goes crazy Kathryn.

—Maude Laslie

20th Birthday

It was a long day . . .

*The dark womb of the Universe
gave birth to a golden dawn—*

*as radiant as a blonde, curly-haired five-year-old
in her crisp white organdy Easter dress,*

and as fleeting—

soon scalded

by the billowing steam

as she burns off the morning dew with her own warmth,

tarnished

by the rising grey mist

that deepens and darkens,

finally consumed

*by towering thunderheads of wicked sludge
that chill,*

and harden,

and explode into bitter hailstones.

. . . and I was stoned.

—Leslie Brooks

I do not like

The dark that comes

Before the storm ;

Some cave-ancestor

Takes one glance

And seeks the fire.

I cannot catch the butterfly

As he floats past,

But I can take from him

The gift of joy.

Stars

and

laughter

Break

the

dark.

—Virginia Slack

Unmasked?

What pretty things—

*these masks we wear
to hide ourselves
and all our being.*

What pretty things—

*they hide the care,
the love, the hate,
and all our feeling.*

What pretty things—

*benign and cold ;
never hearing,
never seeing.*

What pretty things—

*and if I take
the mask away,
what ugliness?*

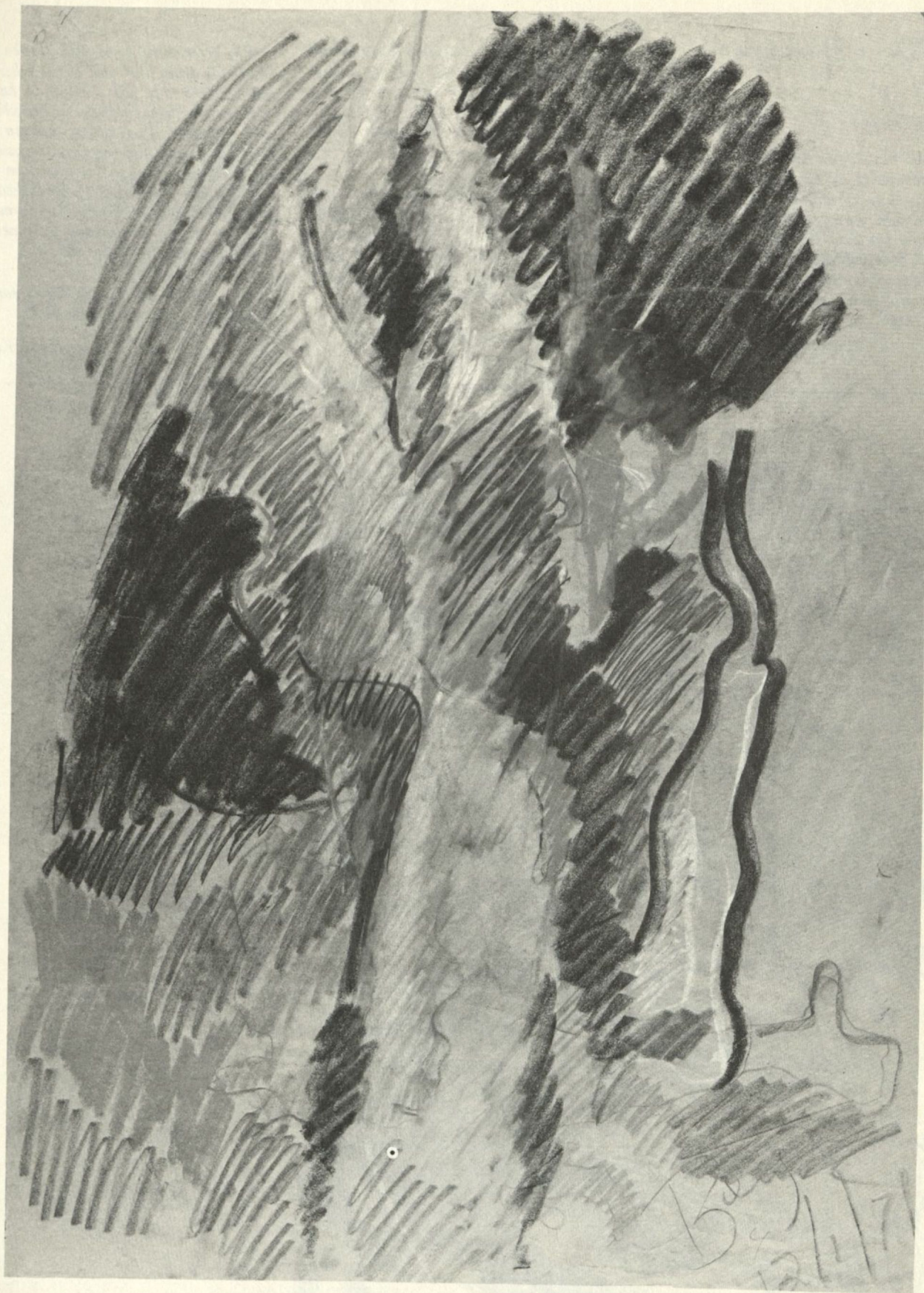
. . . what beauty?

—C. Meredythe Vallee

You Me and the Monster

ON A SLEEPY SATURDAY MORNING,
YOU ME AND THE MONSTER
LYING IN OUR BED.
THE ORGE IS IN THE MIDDLE,
HIS HAND UPON MY BREAST.
WE ABHORE HIS VERY PRESENCE.
A SOUL SUCKING VAMPIRE,
WHO CANNOT LIVE IN THE SUN.
COMING BY AMBIGUOUS INVITATION
HE WILL NOT EASILY RUN.
HE BREAKFASTS WITH US THIS MOURN,
"WILL YOU HAVE EGGS AND BACON,"
SITTING IN BETWEEN.
"I'D PREFER TO GNAW YOUR SOUL CORD
AND BELCH YOUR DISCONTENT,
A FINE MEAL—
MY STOMACH IS THE UNIVERSE
AN ABYSMAL DRAINAGE DITCH
DIRECTING THE FLOW OF YOUR HEARTBLOOD
YOUR FEELINGS DIGESTED, MY REWARD."

—Eloise Whitmire



Chalk Drawing by Sharon Bey

"Dear Wanderer"

Dear Wanderer,

School has begun once more; but this year there will be no more vineyards in the cold, chilling winds of an autumn afternoon. Do you remember how gray and alone the air felt? I remember how the last, lonely fruits hung limply on the vines almost resigned to the fact that they would soon shrivel up and return to the earth.

The air was misty, almost foggy in the early morning. It was one of those dreary October days when the leaves were gone . . . except in scattered piles near the rotting old barn where the grapes were weighed.

We had no business there . . . breaking dreams that we remembered: dreams of green vines and of grapes turning purple, dreams of the wild flowers that spread around our bare feet and daringly ventured up between our toes.

The trees were dead and smoke drifted slowly from the old barn where the grizzled old man was trying to halt the chill in his veins before a smouldering heap of leaves. And, when the sun, if indeed there was any sun, was gone, and the night wind began to sway the naked limbs of the trees as they stretched their dull and searching fingers to grasp one last ray of the vanquished summer sun; we had grown a little old.

How shall we laugh, dear wanderer, having seen our vineyard die?

—C. Meredythe Vallee



Picture by Pelham Lyles

*The need to belong
is powerful
in us
Those cast out can fight
and win, or stop
playing the game
altogether*

*But either way
a twinge still lingers
A fear lies sleeping
in the mind*

*Can we ever really mean it
when we ignore the
laughter?
—Allyson Harmon*

Umbilical

*my eyes pulled again and again to the softer
greens and browns of earth—as though
sky's brilliance were too painful — too beautiful —
to look at.*

*O holy
damnable bloody binding tight around my
heart and head —*

*ancient cord
preventing all but my eyes movement —
memory that will be.*

*suspended in stasis I dream of sweetly gleaming
knife blades transforming me
until I*

*feel land moulding me like the tree-strong
body of love —
until I*

*cut the cord off me and
bleed myself free.*

—Maude Laslie

Rainbow

*Today began newly bathed
In clear sweet rain
And dressed in yellow light
That caught the rain drops.
Or did the droplets trap the rays
And send them scattering
Every way
Clothed in tints that matched the world?*

Eileen Vickery



Phantasmagoria No. 3 by George McKinney

The Sunday Visitor

by Jill Gerber

Maggie Rose Thornton was the meanest girl I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. She was ugly too, uglier than Lorena Greene, and that was saying a plenty. Maggie Rose had buck teeth, crossed eyes, and red frizzy hair. Her face was one big freckle, and she could whip any boy this side of Whooton County.

I lived in the biggest house in town with my Grandmother Pensley. Grandmother always wore a black dress that had a white lace neckling. In the center of the neck she wore a beautiful silver pin that sparkled so much that it nearly made you want to squeeze your eyes shut. Even after the lace collar became so ragged that Grandmother had to replace it with white broadcloth, that pin shone out. Grandmother was always neat. Her silvery white hair pulled back tightly in a top knot was never out of place.

Sometimes when Grandmother had teas I would squench up my eyes and imagine her young again. I would see her beautiful and young in a long silk gown. She had the pin on, but in my dreams it did not stand out like it did in real life. The room would be full of laughing ladies in long beautiful gowns. Grandmother would gracefully move in and out serving tea in sparkling white china. The furniture was new and fine in my imaginary teas, but then some stupid lady like Mrs. Fincher would ruin it all by saying, "Don't squint so Barbara Anne, or you'll get wrinkles." I would come back to reality and see the worn places in the furniture. The old women would be laughing and talking in their old grey dresses, and Grandmother would be moving gracefully in and out among the people while serving tea from our chipped, yellowed china.

I don't really know why Maggie Rose chose me to be her enemy, but she did. Once I asked her, "Maggie, Rose, why do you beat me up all the time? Why do you hate me so?"

She paused from beating my face for a moment and leaned back a little, digging her rear in my stomach till she found a comfortable spot. She sat there on my stomach all big and sweaty while she thought. She stared down at me with her big brown crossed eyes and finally said, "I don't know, I guess it's 'cause your rich."

"I'm not rich," I said.

"Not rich like money rich," said Maggie Rose, "I mean rich like fineries and polishings and knowing how to be a lady."

"Be a lady!" I screamed. "If there is anything I ain't it's a lady. Grandmother always has to tell me to be a lady. 'Barbara Anne,' she always says, 'no matter what situation you are in, if you count on your heritage and be a lady, you will come out on top.' And then she looks kind

of tired and says, 'Now promise me you will try to be a lady. She really says that after I do something bad.' I just knew after such an eloquent speech Maggie Rose would let me go.

"Damn it." (Maggie Rose cussed as well as she fought.) "You snot-nosed brat, that kind of garbage is what I was meaning." But she didn't hit me any more. Maggie Rose just got up, glared at me hard enough to make me flinch, and shoved her fists into her pockets. Then she walked away whistling a church song she had learned at some tent revival.

When I got home I tried to sneak on into my room without being seen, but Louisa caught me. Her strong black hand held me firmly as she called to my Grandmother.

"Lordy mercy, Mrs. Pensley, this young 'un done gone and got herself into another fight. Lordy mercy, Mrs. Pensley, if she ain't bleedin' like a stuck pig."

Grandmother took me to the parlor. It was kind of dark and cool and comfortable. I remember she washed the blood off my face and put ice on my eye. She gave me some lemonade to drink while she combed and rebraided my hair. Grandmother was the only person I ever knew that could comb out tangles without pulling. She stopped combing and rested her hand gently on the top of my head.

"What happened?"

I stared into my empty glass wishing I could melt like the ice chunks. "It wasn't my fault, Grandmother, honest, it wasn't."

"It takes two to fight, Barbara."

"Not in her fights. She jumped on me and started beating me in the face. I asked her why and she said because I was rich and fine."

Grandmother sighed, "Barbara Anne, you must try to remember to be a lady in all situations. If you will just follow your heritage I am sure you can find a . . ."

I spun around to face my grandmother, "Grandmother," I sobbed with my fists clenched, "Grandmother, it just doesn't work any more!" I cried with my cheek resting against the cold, hard pin.

Finally my grandmother spoke. "Barbara, I know how to solve your problem."

"How?" I asked.

"You may invite Margaret Rose for dinner Sunday."

I sucked in my breath. My stomach felt scared. I stared down at my hands. The nails were dirty and broken, I had scratched a mosquito bite on my left thumb until it bled, I rubbed my sweaty palms over the worn upholstery on the chair and I whispered, "I can't."

"You can if you must." Her eyes were tired and awful old and pleadin'. I bite my lip and look down to the pin.

Sculpture by Debbie Young

